

Surly service from a dealer is no bargain for collectors

By Roger Boye

HERE ARE some more questions from readers with, hopefully, some helpful answers.

Q—I took a Prussian coin dated 1778 to a coin store and asked the man to tell me what he would pay for it. (Coin is described). The dealer acted as if I were giving him a piece of dirt, and finally said in a gruff voice that he'd pay me only \$1. I would like you to print something about dealers who act in this way. After all, the coin could be worth a lot.—J. M., Chicago.

A—In spite of its age, your coin is not excessively rare, retailing for about \$10 in very fine condition. Although dealers would pay less than \$10 to buy the coin (they want to make a profit when they sell it), you should do better than \$1.

The dealer you visited did provide a professional service without charge, and perhaps he sensed that you were not serious about selling the coin. Nonetheless, there's no excuse for discourteous or rude behavior, so you should take your business elsewhere in the future. There are dozens of full-time dealers in the Chicago area (just check the Yellow Pages in the telephone books), and even more part-time dealers. They all want customers.

Q—I read an article in The Tribune about Mrs. Madalyn Murray O'Hair, the "atheists' atheist," who wants the words "In God We Trust" taken off our money. Might she succeed? Also, for how many years have those words been on our dollars?—W. M., North Riverside.

A—Mrs. O'Hair and her two sons have filed suit in federal court demanding that the motto be removed. They contend that its use violates constitutional guarantees of separation of church and state. It seems doubtful that the suit will succeed, although it could be months before the case is decided.

The 1864 two-cent piece was the first United States coins to carry the motto, the result of increased religious sentiment during the Civil War, say some historians. By the early 1900s, it appeared on all U.S. coins; and in 1955, Congress ordered that the motto also be carried on U.S. paper money.

Incidentally, the O'Hairs are not the only people to have objected to use of the motto. President Theodore Roosevelt thought its use was irreverent and came "dangerously close to sacrilege," according to reports at the time.